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RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 003497

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/12/2022

TAGS: [ETRD](#) [CF](#) [GY](#) [VE](#) [BE](#)

SUBJECT: ANTWERP DIAMOND OFFICIAL ALLEGES CHAVEZ EXPORTING  
DIAMONDS TO FUND MILITARY

Classified By: DCM Wayne Bush, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) A senior official in the Antwerp Diamond Center alleged on December 10 to DCM and ECOUNS that Venezuela may be exporting diamonds illegally through third countries, including Ghana and Congo-Brazzaville. The official explained that diamonds from Venezuela and British Guyana are geologically similar, since they date to the period when the continents of South America and Africa were once joined. The official believed that the funds from the sale of those diamonds were used by Hugo Chavez to buy the loyalty of his military.

¶2. (C) The official said that although Venezuela has a significant capacity to produce diamonds, there have been no official exports from the country. However, the similarity of the diamonds geologically could make it possible for Venezuela to send them to Ghana or Guyana, claiming they are diamonds from those countries and having them certified under the Kimberley Process (KP).

¶3. (C) The diamond official recalled a case involving diamonds which Congo-Brazzaville claimed were being mined in its own territory. A Kimberley Process mission was sent and actually overflowed the area the Congo-Brazzaville government claimed the diamonds were being mined from, but found no mining activity. The implication was that the Kimberley Process could likewise look into this diamond trade to verify its compliance with KP.

¶4. (C). (NOTE: Post understands that Venezuela has invited a KP review team to visit in early 2008. END NOTE.).

¶5. (C) COMMENT: These allegations affect the Antwerp Diamond Center due to its role as the center of the world rough diamond trade. Many of the diamonds involved in this trade will at some point pass through Antwerp. The Antwerp Diamond Council tries zealously to protect its good name and does not want conflict diamonds or similar illegal trade to tarnish its reputation.

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